

Research Article

Inclusive Pedagogy: Toward a Pedagogy of Belonging and Transformation

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Abstract

Inclusive pedagogy is increasingly promoted within higher education as a response to inequity and exclusion, yet it is often framed as a technical or policy-driven intervention focused on access and accommodation. Drawing on decolonial and humanising scholarship, this article challenges such framings by conceptualising inclusive pedagogy as an ethical, political, and ontological praxis concerned with epistemological equity. Using qualitative interview data from historically marginalised psychologists, drawn from a doctoral study employing a Decolonial Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, the article examines how inclusive pedagogy is experienced, contested, and reimagined within Westernised higher education contexts. The findings reveal how pedagogy operates simultaneously as a site of epistemic violence and as a space of relational possibility, shaped by racialised standards of legitimacy, embodied reflexivity, ethical discomfort, and institutional constraint. Inclusive pedagogy is shown to function not as a fixed set of strategies but as an ongoing praxis of becoming, sustained through relational care, critical consciousness, and resistance to Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies. The article contributes to scholarship on inclusive and decolonial pedagogy by advancing epistemological equity as a central analytic lens and by foregrounding lived experience as a critical site for understanding the harms and transformative possibilities of pedagogy in higher education.

Keywords

Inclusive Pedagogy, Decolonial Pedagogy, Epistemological Equity, Higher Education, Humanising Pedagogy

1. Introduction

Inclusive pedagogy is increasingly invoked within higher education as a means of addressing inequity, exclusion, and differential student outcomes. Yet, such invocations often rest on an implicit assumption that pedagogy is a neutral or technical process, concerned primarily with access, accommodation, or representation. Critical and decolonial scholarship challenges this assumption, arguing instead that pedagogy functions as a powerful social and epistemic practice through which hierarchies of knowledge, legitimacy, and subjectivity

are reproduced or disrupted [19]. From this perspective, teaching and learning are not merely instructional acts but sites where power operates to determine whose knowledge counts [14], whose voices are heard, and whose humanity is affirmed.

Despite growing interest in decolonial and inclusive approaches across disciplines, evidence suggests that pedagogical transformation remains uneven [2, 12]. Inclusion is frequently articulated at the level of policy or institutional rhetoric, while Eurocentric curricula, assessment regimes, and

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standards of legitimacy remain largely intact. As a result, inclusive pedagogy risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative, reinforcing the very hierarchies it seeks to challenge unless it explicitly confronts questions of epistemology, power, and relationality [20] within educational practice.

This article contributes to scholarship on inclusive and decolonial pedagogy by advancing epistemological equity as the central analytic lens through which inclusion must be understood. Rather than treating inclusion as a technical, instrumental, or policy-driven intervention, the article theorises inclusive pedagogy as an ontological and relational praxis, one that is ethical, political, and continuously negotiated. Drawing on qualitative interview data from historically marginalised psychologists, the article examines how inclusive pedagogy is experienced, contested, and reimagined within Westernised higher education contexts.

Specifically, the article aims to: (1) illuminate how pedagogy operates as a site of epistemic exclusion and legitimacy-making; (2) explore how inclusive pedagogical practices are enacted as relational and humanising responses to coloniality; and (3) theorise inclusive pedagogy as an ongoing praxis of becoming that sustains belonging, plurality, and critical consciousness. In doing so, the article foregrounds lived experience as a critical site of knowledge for understanding both the harms and possibilities of inclusive pedagogy.

To situate this inquiry, the following section reviews scholarship on inclusive pedagogy through a decolonial lens, tracing how debates around power, epistemology, and relationality have shaped contemporary understandings of inclusion in higher education.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly positions inclusive pedagogy as inseparable from decolonial critique, challenging the assumption that teaching is a neutral or technical process. Rather, pedagogy is understood as a site where epistemic hierarchies are reproduced or disrupted, shaping whose knowledge is legitimised and whose subjectivities are recognised. While interest in decolonial approaches is growing across disciplines, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that implementation remains uneven, constrained by institutional structures, epistemic inertia, and entrenched Eurocentrism.

Studies in human rights education illustrate this tension clearly. Aldawood's [1] analysis of syllabi and educator interviews found that although decolonial discourse is increasingly visible, pedagogical practice remains largely unchanged. Structural barriers, lack of pedagogical familiarity, and the persistence of Eurocentric curricula limit the translation of decolonial commitments into classroom enactment. These findings echo broader critiques of higher education institutions, where inclusion is frequently articulated as policy aspiration rather than epistemic transformation. As such, inclusive pedagogy risks becoming symbolic unless it explicitly confronts how power operates through curricula, assessment, and pedagogical relationships [27].

In contrast, research from the Global South offers grounded

illustrations of how pedagogy can be reimagined as relational, situated, and resistant. In Colombia, Castaneda-Pena and Méndez-Rivera [7] document the use of *pedagogías insuñidas* in doctoral English Language Teaching programmes, emphasising horizontal teacher–student relationships, submerged guiding, and decolonial voicing. These approaches reject hierarchical knowledge transmission in favour of collaborative meaning-making and epistemic plurality. Similarly, Omodan [23] conceptualises transformative pedagogy as a decolonial teaching philosophy rooted in trust, shared authority, and academic freedom, foregrounding pedagogy as an ethical relationship rather than a delivery mechanism.

A growing body of work further emphasises the embodied and reflexive dimensions of decolonial pedagogy. Dovey's [11] reflective account of teaching African cinema highlights the ethical labour required of educators, particularly the need for self-scrutiny, humility, and collaborative curriculum reform. From a feminist disability perspective, Novsima [22] extends this critique by demonstrating how colonial pedagogy is inherently ableist, positioning the educator's body and lived experience as central tools for resisting normative epistemic standards. Together, these studies underscore that inclusive pedagogy demands not only curricular change but also deep reflexivity regarding positionality, embodiment, and complicity.

Rather than a fixed model, decolonial pedagogy is increasingly theorised as a dynamic and unfinished praxis. Castañeda-Peña et al.'s conceptualises decolonial English Language Teaching as a praxis of becoming, characterised by ethical responsiveness, relational accountability, and openness to Southern epistemologies [6, 7]. Knowledge, in this framing, is not stabilised or universal but negotiated within specific historical, cultural, and political contexts. This emphasis on becoming aligns with broader decolonial thought, which resists closure, standardisation, and universal claims to neutrality.

The ethical foundations of decolonial pedagogy are further elaborated through scholarship on humanising education. Zembylas [32] argues that pedagogies grounded in empathy, dignity, and mutual recognition can serve as critical entry points for decolonial practice, even as tensions between care and critique remain. Empirical work demonstrates that such approaches can extend beyond the classroom. Silva & Students for Diversity Now's [25] U.S.-based study shows how decolonial pedagogy embedded through collaborative class projects fostered student activism and social engagement, positioning education as a catalyst for social transformation rather than passive knowledge consumption.

Discipline-specific research reinforces the importance of epistemological disruption. In Pakistan, Mansoor and Bano demonstrate how worksheet-based interventions in English literature enabled students to reinterpret canonical texts through their lived realities, challenging Western epistemic dominance [16]. These findings resonate with broader critiques of tokenistic curriculum diversification, suggesting that

decolonial pedagogy requires integration rather than supplementation. At an institutional level, Nevhudoli [21] argues that South African universities must reimagine teaching spaces through community-engaged learning and dedicated decolonial studies programmes, highlighting the need for structural support to sustain pedagogical change.

Taken together, this literature positions inclusive pedagogy as a decolonial praxis that seeks to dismantle Eurocentric hierarchies, honour plural epistemologies, and reconfigure teacher–student relationships. However, while existing scholarship offers rich conceptual and contextual insights, comparatively less attention has been paid to how these pedagogical dynamics are experienced, negotiated, and enacted in everyday practice by those who are most directly affected by epistemic exclusion. To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative, decolonial methodological approach that foregrounds lived experience as a critical site of knowledge production [26]. The following section therefore outlines the research design, participants, and analytic framework used to explore how historically marginalised psychologists experience, interpret, and reimagine inclusive pedagogy within Westernised higher education contexts.

2. Materials and Methods

This article draws on qualitative interview data generated as part of a doctoral study by Okoli [24], which employed a Decolonial Constructivist Grounded Theory (DCGT) approach. DCGT is a qualitative methodology that co-constructs theory from lived experience while explicitly challenging colonial and Eurocentric epistemologies and centring marginalised ways of knowing. The study examined how historically marginalised psychologists experience, interpret, and resist coloniality within Westernised psychology curricula [24]. The purpose of the original study was to generate a substantive, contextually grounded theory of decolonisation in psychology education, rather than to test pre-existing models.

Decolonial Constructivist Grounded Theory extends constructivist grounded theory [8, 24] through an explicit decolonial orientation, recognising that knowledge is co-constructed, situated, and shaped by power relations. This methodological approach was selected to challenge Eurocentric epistemic assumptions embedded in conventional qualitative inquiry and to centre participants as epistemic agents rather than objects of analysis. Reflexivity was integral to the research process, informed by the researcher's positionality as a Black African psychologist educated across the Global South and Global North, and grounded in relational ethics consistent with decolonial scholarship [29].

The doctoral study involved twenty-two historically marginalised psychologists across the United Kingdom, Nigeria, South Africa, Canada, and the United States, contributing twenty-four semi-structured interviews. Participants included students, early-career researchers, lecturers, senior academics, and clinical leaders, ensuring a diversity of perspectives

across institutional roles and geopolitical contexts. Interviews explored experiences of epistemic exclusion, pedagogical resistance, and visions for decolonised futures in psychology. All interviews were conducted ethically, anonymised, and analysed using iterative grounded theory procedures, including line-by-line coding, constant comparison, memo-writing, and theoretical integration.

For the purposes of the present article, interview extracts are used selectively and illustratively, not to re-present the full grounded theory analysis, but to anchor conceptual arguments in lived experience. The extracts illuminate how inclusive pedagogy is negotiated, resisted, and reimaged in practice, supporting the article's theoretical synthesis of inclusive pedagogy as a decolonial, relational, and humanising praxis. Full methodological detail, ethical approval, and analytic procedures are reported in [24].

Grounded in this methodological framework, the following section presents the study's findings, drawing on selected interview extracts to illuminate how inclusive pedagogy is experienced, contested, and reimaged by historically marginalised psychologists within Westernised higher education contexts. Rather than offering an exhaustive account of the grounded theory analysis, the findings foreground participants' lived experiences as analytically generative sites through which epistemic exclusion, relational possibility, ethical discomfort, and institutional constraint are made visible.

3. Results

Drawing on interview extracts from Okoli's [24] doctoral study, this section presents participants' accounts of how inclusive pedagogy is experienced, contested, and reimaged within Westernised higher education. The findings are organised around five interrelated themes that capture how pedagogy functions as a site of epistemic exclusion, relational possibility, ethical discomfort, and ongoing negotiation. The themes are presented as analytically distinct but conceptually overlapping, reflecting the iterative and relational nature of inclusive pedagogy as it is lived and negotiated in practice.

3.1. Pedagogy as Epistemic Exclusion and Erasure

Participants consistently described curricula as sites where Eurocentric knowledge is normalised and other epistemologies rendered invisible or illegitimate. Shereen, a PhD researcher in the United States directly challenged dominant disciplinary origin stories, stating, "To say that psychology started in Europe is a gross... lie." Such narratives were experienced as more than historical inaccuracies; they shaped who could be recognised as a legitimate knower within the discipline.

Several participants highlighted the systematic absence of their cultures and histories. Shereen noted, "Arabs are never included in the main curricula... there's a world of invisibility

around Arabs.” *Maple*, a Nigerian psychologist and researcher echoed this experience of erasure, explaining, “Our culture is totally absent... It’s like before we were colonised, we never had mental illnesses.” These absences were not perceived as neutral omissions but as active forms of epistemic violence.

Others linked curricular content to broader histories of harm. *Tina*, a PhD researcher in a UK university reflected on psychology’s complicity in colonial violence, asking, “How many psychologists... devised torture methods in Guantánamo... to oppress people that look like me?” Together, these accounts illustrate how pedagogy reproduces exclusion while often presenting itself as objective and value-free. These experiences of epistemic erasure were closely tied to broader questions of legitimacy, revealing how power operates not only through absence but through the active policing of knowledge.

3.2. Legitimacy, Whiteness, and the Policing of Knowledge

Participants described how whiteness structured what counted as rigorous, scientific, or credible knowledge. *Ali*, a professor of Psychiatry in Nigeria observed that when non-Western scholars were introduced, “there’s this quiet questioning of their rigour.” *Ata*, a psychology professor in a South African University similarly noted, “All psychology is culture... Euro-American psychology is culture, but it’s presented as if universal.”

Writing and assessment practices were also identified as sites of exclusion. *Karl*, a psychology practitioner in Canada explained, “When we write, we’re expected to write in this Eurocentric, academic way,” while *Albertha*, a PhD researcher in the United States warned, “These tests make marginalised groups seem unintelligent by the assessment standards.” *Shereen* challenged dominant standards of evidence altogether, stating, “I don’t need some white scientist in a lab coat to tell me this works.”

These reflections reveal how pedagogical norms subtly police legitimacy, positioning Eurocentric knowledge as neutral while marking other epistemologies as subjective, political, or deficient. In contrast to these exclusionary dynamics, participants also articulated inclusive pedagogy as a relational and humanising practice capable of reconfiguring pedagogical relationships.

3.3. Inclusive Pedagogy as Relational and Humanising Practice

Against experiences of exclusion, participants articulated inclusive pedagogy as a relational, humanising practice grounded in dignity, empathy, and recognition. *Cass*, a senior lecturer in psychology in the UK described the impact of relational teaching, noting, “Seeing students’ light bulbs go off was... rewarding.” She emphasised the importance of starting

from students’ self-understandings: “You’re much safer looking at people through their definition of self and then working from there.”

For many participants, inclusive pedagogy was framed as an ethical responsibility rather than a technical adjustment. *Yasa*, a psychology professor in a South Africa captured this ethos powerfully: “Anything... that suffocates the spirit of a human being must be addressed with urgency.” *Pauline*, another psychology professor in South Africa similarly described inclusive teaching as restorative, stating, “Inclusive teaching should make you feel whole, not fragmented.”

Roonie, a PhD researcher in the UK highlighted the symbolic and material significance of representation, explaining, “When students see their own traditions on the reading list, it tells them their knowledge matters.” These accounts position inclusive pedagogy as a practice that rehumanises learning and affirms epistemic dignity. However, participants emphasised that such relational practices are rarely comfortable, often requiring educators and students to engage with discomfort, reflexivity, and complicity.

3.4. Discomfort, Reflexivity, and Decolonisation as Praxis

Participants emphasised that inclusive and decolonial pedagogy is inherently uncomfortable, requiring reflexivity and the willingness to confront complicity. *Kate*, a psychologist in Nigeria expressed frustration with passive learning environments: “As students, the questions may arise, but there’s no outlet... we just regurgitate what we’re given.” *Nana*, another Nigerian psychologist echoed this disconnection, stating, “We are taught theories that don’t speak to us.”

Pauline described decolonisation as an unsettling but necessary process: “When you start to decolonise your teaching, you realise how complicit you’ve been. That discomfort is necessary...it means you’re waking up.” *Shereen* reinforced this view, arguing that transformation requires action: “We need to think about critical consciousness as a doing, not just the conceptual.”

Rather than signalling failure, discomfort was framed as productive, a space where educators and students begin to reimagine knowledge, identity, and responsibility. These pedagogical struggles do not occur in isolation but are shaped by institutional conditions that both constrain and enable inclusive practice.

3.5. Institutional Constraints and Inclusive Pedagogy as Ongoing Praxis

Participants consistently framed inclusive pedagogy as an ongoing, contested praxis shaped by institutional constraints, emotional labour, and contemporary mechanisms of control, including digital technologies. While many expressed strong ethical commitments to inclusion, they also described navi-

gating environments where epistemic transformation was limited by bureaucratic, economic, and political pressures.

Several participants highlighted the gap between institutional rhetoric and lived practice. Albertha noted, “Support and resources are what’s lacking... It really is a sense of belonging.” Cass similarly described definitional ambiguity around decolonisation, explaining, “People are defining [decolonisation] differently... it’s hard to know what we’re aiming for.” These uncertainties contributed to frustration and exhaustion, particularly for educators attempting to enact inclusive pedagogy within risk-averse institutions.

Pressures to conform to Eurocentric norms were especially pronounced in relation to publishing and professional legitimacy. Ata observed, “Publishing is still in the hands of Europe... you end up changing your work to make it sound like something you are not saying.” Irene, a PhD researcher in the United States described learning culturally grounded approaches “on the side,” outside formal institutional recognition. Andrea, associate psychology professor and practitioner in Canada captured the affective toll of this tension, stating, “Sometimes I feel like I’m walking a tightrope... between what students need and what the institution expects.”

Participants also described how digital pedagogies functioned as contemporary extensions of institutional control. Tina experienced surveillance-heavy assessments as alienating: “It’s like they don’t trust us... everything is about monitoring, not learning.” Andrea similarly critiqued data-driven teaching cultures, noting, “There’s this obsession with analytics... attendance dashboards, engagement scores... but not with whether students feel seen.” These practices were experienced as reinforcing mistrust, standardisation, and depersonalisation, rather than inclusion.

At the same time, participants resisted framing inclusive pedagogy as futile. Digital spaces were also described as potential sites of reclamation and epistemic expansion. Roonie reflected, “Digital platforms can connect us to thinkers and communities we were never taught about in class.” Ali added, “If we invite students to bring their own media and community stories online, we’re already changing what counts as knowledge.” These accounts suggest that technologies, like institutions themselves, are not neutral but contested terrains, capable of reproducing or disrupting epistemic hierarchies depending on how they are mobilised.

Finally, participants emphasised that inclusive pedagogy is sustained through collective struggle, solidarity, and mutual care. Ali noted, “When you introduce theorists from outside Europe, you have to justify them.” Pauline and Roonie spoke of the exhaustion involved in sustaining change, while Shereen reflected on the internalised effects of long-term invalidation: “You’ve been invalidated so long you start to invalidate yourself... We have to uplift each other.”

Together, these reflections position inclusive pedagogy not as a completed project but as an ongoing praxis, lived through tension, resistance, adaptation, and hope within constraining institutional landscapes.

4. Discussion

Building on the empirical findings, this discussion interprets participants’ accounts through decolonial, humanising, and inclusive pedagogical frameworks to examine how power, legitimacy, and relationality intersect across pedagogical and institutional contexts. The article set out to theorise inclusive pedagogy as a decolonial, relational, and humanising praxis rather than a technical or policy-driven intervention. Drawing on interview extracts from Okoli’s [24] doctoral research and situated within a growing body of global scholarship, the findings illuminate how pedagogy functions simultaneously as a site of epistemic violence and a space of potential transformation [24]. Together, they underscore the need to reconceptualise inclusion as an ethical, political, and ontological commitment to epistemological equity.

4.1. Pedagogy as Epistemic Violence and the Reproduction of Coloniality

Participants’ accounts strongly affirm critical scholarship that positions pedagogy as a central mechanism through which colonial power is reproduced in higher education. As Bernstein argued, pedagogy operates as a message system that communicates whose knowledge counts and whose voices are authorised [4, 5]. The findings demonstrate that Eurocentric curricula, disciplinary origin stories, and assessment practices continue to normalise Western epistemologies as universal while rendering Indigenous, African, Asian, and diasporic knowledges invisible or illegitimate [9]. These practices are not neutral but actively shape the contours of belonging and exclusion within academic spaces.

Shereen’s assertion that locating the origins of psychology solely in Europe is a “gross... lie” speaks directly to what Mignolo [19] describes as zero-point epistemology, the colonial fiction of a detached, universal knower. Maple’s reflection on the erasure of precolonial understandings of mental health further illustrates how epistemic violence is not merely symbolic but materially constrains what can be known, taught, and legitimised. These findings resonate with [1] analysis of human rights education, which similarly identified the persistence of Eurocentric epistemic foundations despite rhetorical commitments to decolonisation.

Crucially, the study extends this literature by showing that epistemic violence is experienced affectively and ontologically, shaping learners’ sense of self, dignity, and legitimacy. Participants did not simply describe curricular absences; they articulated how exclusion produces feelings of invisibility, fragmentation, and epistemic inferiority. This reinforces the argument that inclusive pedagogy must address not only curricular content but the positioning of learners as knowers within pedagogical relationships.

4.2. Whiteness, Legitimacy, and the Policing of Knowledge

Closely linked to epistemic erasure is the role of whiteness in structuring legitimacy within academic practice. Participants' accounts reveal how Eurocentric knowledge is treated as inherently rigorous and objective, while African, Asian, Indigenous, and community-based epistemologies are subject to heightened scrutiny. Ali's observation that non-Western theorists must be continually justified, while Western scholars are assumed to be authoritative, reflects what de Sousa Santos terms *epistemicide*, the systematic devaluation of alternative knowledge systems [10].

Assessment and academic writing emerged as particularly powerful sites of epistemic control. Albertha's critique of intelligence testing and Karl's reflections on Eurocentric academic writing norms align with Novsima's [22] feminist disability critique, which highlights how colonial pedagogy is inherently ableist and exclusionary. Together, these findings underscore that inclusion framed solely in terms of access or accommodation risks reproducing harm if dominant epistemological norms remain intact.

By foregrounding epistemological equity, this analysis advances existing scholarship beyond deficit-oriented inclusion. Rather than asking how marginalised students can be supported to succeed within unchanged systems, the findings compel a more fundamental question: whose knowledge structures are being protected, and at what cost? At the same time, participants' narratives point toward alternative pedagogical possibilities grounded in relationality, care, and mutual recognition.

4.3. Inclusive Pedagogy as Relational and Humanising Praxis

In contrast to experiences of epistemic exclusion, participants articulated inclusive pedagogy as a relational and humanising practice that affirms dignity, agency, and belonging. Cass's emphasis on beginning from students' self-definitions and Yasa's insistence on addressing anything that "suffocates the spirit" align closely with humanising pedagogy [32] and decolonial teaching philosophies that centre relational accountability [23]. These accounts reinforce the view that inclusive pedagogy is not a set of techniques but a way of being that reshapes pedagogical relationships.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate that relational pedagogy does not diminish academic rigour but reframes it. When students encounter their epistemic traditions within curricula, as Roonie noted, legitimacy and engagement are strengthened rather than diluted. This supports Yu's [30] findings that culturally inclusive pedagogy enhances both engagement and academic outcomes, while extending the argument beyond performance metrics to questions of justice and epistemic recognition.

In this sense, inclusive pedagogy functions as a form of epistemic repair by sustaining dignity, plurality, and access through relational design principles [28]. The study contributes to the literature by evidencing how relational practices can actively disrupt colonial pedagogical logics rather than merely soften their effects.

4.4. Discomfort, Reflexivity, and Decolonisation as Praxis of Becoming

A central contribution of this study lies in its illumination of discomfort as an essential dimension of decolonial inclusive pedagogy. Participants consistently described tension, unease, and self-implication as necessary conditions for transformation. Pauline's account of discomfort as a sign of "waking up" mirrors Freire's [13] concept of conscientisation and Bell's [3] notion of decolonial atmospheres, where disruption fosters critical awareness and ethical responsibility.

These findings challenge institutional tendencies to equate inclusion with harmony or emotional safety alone. As Zembylas [31] argues, discomfort can be pedagogically productive when held within relationally ethical spaces that support reflection rather than retraumatisation. Shereen's insistence that critical consciousness must be enacted rather than merely theorised further underscores decolonial pedagogy as praxis rather than abstraction.

Taken together, the findings support Canagarajah's [7] framing of decolonial pedagogy as a praxis of becoming, unfinished, adaptive, and ethically responsive. Inclusive pedagogy is thus revealed not as a stable model of best practice but as an ongoing negotiation shaped by power, context, and relational accountability.

4.5. Institutional Constraints and Inclusive Pedagogy as Ongoing Praxis

Despite strong ethical commitments to inclusion, participants' accounts reveal significant institutional constraints on pedagogical transformation. Resource limitations, definitional ambiguity, publication pressures, and bureaucratic risk management emerged as persistent barriers to meaningful change. These experiences align with critiques that higher education often reduces inclusion to compliance rather than epistemic transformation [17, 18, 27].

Ata's reflection on modifying scholarly work to conform to Eurocentric publishing norms illustrates how epistemic conformity is structurally enforced, while Andrea's metaphor of "walking a tightrope" captures the emotional labour involved in sustaining inclusive practice within ambivalent institutions. These findings echo Nevhudoli's [21] call for institutional reimagining, highlighting that pedagogical change cannot be sustained without structural support and epistemic redistribution.

Importantly, institutional constraint also operates through

contemporary digital infrastructures. Participants' experiences of surveillance-heavy assessment and analytics-driven teaching reflect what Harris et al. [15] describe as panic pedagogy, where efficiency and monitoring eclipse relational care. Yet, digital spaces were also described as sites of possibility, enabling access to marginalised thinkers and community-based knowledge. This tension underscores that technology, like pedagogy itself, is not neutral but a contested terrain capable of reproducing or disrupting epistemic hierarchies depending on how it is mobilised.

Taken together, these findings position inclusive pedagogy as an ongoing praxis sustained through negotiation, resistance, solidarity, and care. Inclusion emerges not as a completed project but as a collective struggle shaped by institutional power and ethical commitment. While the study draws on a diverse transnational sample, its aim is not generalisation but conceptual insight into how inclusive pedagogy is lived and contested across contexts. Ultimately, the analysis underscores the need to understand inclusive pedagogy not only as a classroom practice but as a broader ethical and institutional commitment with profound implications for pedagogy, policy, and knowledge production.

5. Conclusion: Inclusive Pedagogy as Praxis of Becoming

This article conceptualises inclusive pedagogy as an ethical, political, and ontological praxis, rather than a technical or policy-driven intervention. Drawing on interview extracts from historically marginalised psychologists, the study illustrates how pedagogy operates simultaneously as a site of epistemic violence and as a space of possibility for rehumanisation, resistance, and transformation.

By advancing epistemological equity as the central analytic lens, the article reframes inclusion as a question of whose knowledge counts, whose voices travel, and whose humanity is affirmed within educational spaces. The findings reveal that inclusive pedagogy is lived through relational practices, ethical discomfort, and ongoing negotiation within constraining institutional contexts. It is not a fixed endpoint or a stable model of best practice, but a praxis of becoming, unfinished, contested, and responsive to power.

Rather than seeking harmony or closure, inclusive pedagogy sustains plurality, tension, and critical hope. Its transformative potential lies not in perfect implementation, but in its refusal to accept epistemic suffocation as inevitable. In reclaiming education as a space of justice and belonging, inclusive pedagogy offers a generative pathway toward pluriversal futures in higher education, futures in which learners are not merely accommodated, but recognised as whole, dignified, and legitimate knowers.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a set of interrelated recommendations are proposed for pedagogical practice, institutional policy, and knowledge production in higher education. These recommendations are not offered as technical solutions or best-practice templates, but as ethically grounded orientations intended to support epistemological equity, relational accountability, and decolonial transformation.

6.1. Recommendations for Pedagogical Practice

First, inclusive pedagogy should be approached as an epistemological commitment rather than a set of technical adjustments. Educators are encouraged to move beyond accommodation- or access-based models of inclusion and to critically examine whose knowledge is legitimised within curricula, assessment practices, and classroom interactions. Pedagogical practices that foreground relationality, reflexivity, and dignity, such as centring students' lived experiences, integrating plural epistemologies into core curricula, and treating learners as legitimate knowers, offer concrete pathways for rehumanising learning while disrupting colonial assumptions embedded in disciplinary knowledge.

Educators should also recognise discomfort as an integral component of inclusive and decolonial pedagogy. Rather than interpreting tension or unease as pedagogical failure, discomfort can be understood as a productive site for critical consciousness, reflexive learning, and ethical engagement. Professional development initiatives should therefore support educators in developing the reflexive capacities required to navigate discomfort responsibly, with attention to power, positionality, and relational care.

6.2. Recommendations for Institutional Policy and Support

Second, institutions must move beyond rhetorical or compliance-driven approaches to inclusion and invest structurally in epistemic transformation. The findings demonstrate that inclusive pedagogical practices are difficult to sustain within institutional environments that prioritise risk management, standardisation, and Eurocentric validation. Universities are therefore encouraged to review policies related to curriculum approval, assessment standards, promotion, and publication in order to recognise and support epistemologically diverse forms of scholarship and teaching.

Institutional support for inclusive pedagogy should include protected time, resources, and collective spaces for curriculum development, rather than relying on the unpaid emotional and intellectual labour of marginalised educators. Clear institutional commitments to epistemological equity, rather than ambiguous or symbolic references to decolonisation are necessary to reduce burnout and to enable sustained pedagogical change.

6.3. Recommendations for Digital Pedagogy and Learning Environments

Third, institutions and educators should critically examine the values embedded within digital pedagogical infrastructures. Technologies that prioritise surveillance, analytics, and efficiency risk reproducing pedagogies of mistrust and control, undermining relational and humanising forms of learning. Conversely, when digital platforms are oriented toward dialogue, student knowledge production, and connection to marginalised epistemic communities, they can support pluriversal learning and epistemic expansion.

It is recommended that digital pedagogies be designed and evaluated not solely in terms of engagement metrics, but in relation to students' experiences of recognition, belonging, and epistemic dignity.

6.4. Recommendations for Knowledge Production and Future Research

Finally, this study highlights the need for further research that centres lived experience as a legitimate site of knowledge production in psychology and education. Future research should continue to employ decolonial and participatory methodologies that challenge Eurocentric epistemic norms and foreground the voices of those most affected by epistemic exclusion. At the level of academic publishing and research governance, greater attention is needed to how legitimacy, rigour, and impact are defined and enforced.

Inclusive pedagogy, understood as epistemic repair, has implications beyond the classroom. It calls for a re-examination of how knowledge is produced, evaluated, and circulated within higher education. Supporting such work requires not only individual commitment, but collective and institutional responsibility.

Abbreviations

DCGT Decolonial Constructivist Grounded Theory

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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